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Proudly representing Eastern Washington in the United States House of Representatives.

Inside Congress for Week Ending January 11, 2002

Welcome to this week's edition of Inside Congress. I am glad to share with you a little of my work in the national legislature. Please follow the listed links or contact my office for more information on the topics mentioned here.

EASTERN WASHINGTON LOSES ONE OF ITS OWN

This week the war in Afghanistan took on a personal note as eastern Washington lost a native son. Sgt. Nathan P. Hays was among the seven Marines who perished in the crash of a KC-130 Hercules refueling plane in Pakistan. The aircraft was destined for a forward operating base at Shamsi, Pakistan, on Wednesday night when it crashed.

As a parent, I can imagine nothing more painful than losing a child. Nathan's service and sacrifice to his country are appreciated by all of Eastern Washington.

While so far the loss of life in this war effort has been minimal, each American life that is lost is one too many. Men and women of our area are overseas risking their lives to defend the freedoms that we enjoy each day. Each of us should take time to share our appreciation with a service member or veteran. Their dedication and commitment to our freedom preserves our way of life.

In some ways, the war in Afghanistan is so far away. Unfortunately, this crash brought it home for all of us. I join many others in extending my heartfelt condolences to the family and friends of Nathan Hays as they endure this tragedy and celebrate his life. May God Bless his soul.

TAX RELIEF A PRIORITY IN CONGRESS

The American people are overtaxed. One of my priorities in the up-coming session of Congress will be to restore fiscal responsibility in Washington, D.C. by providing tax relief to the hard working families of this country. I believe the federal government taxes our families and communities too much.

One of the reasons I came to Congress was to return money, power and control to the people. In 2001, Congress took a major step toward making the tax code fairer and returning a small portion of the surplus to the Americans that helped create it. The House passed tax relief legislation which gave every American worker a tax rebate. We passed legislation to double the child tax credit from \$500 to \$1,000. Legislation was passed to help retiring Americans by increasing IRA contribution limits from \$2,000 to \$5,000. We provided taxpayers with relief from the unfair marriage penalty.

In this time of economic uncertainty, it is more important than ever to keep government spending to a minimum while providing investment incentives to both businesses and individuals. Excessive federal spending simply means more federal borrowing, higher taxes, or both. This is counterintuitive to an "economic stimulus," and does not create greater demand and does not have a positive net effect on long-term production. I am pleased the House has passed two bills which provide relief to those affected by the economic downturn and focus on the tax reductions that will provide the greatest stimulus.

On a similar note, I will be working hard to ensure that we continue to retire the nation's public debt. Since I came to Congress, we created the first balanced budget in thirty years and the first budget surplus in forty years. The next step is to get rid of the public debt that has accumulated. Unfortunately the nation's security requirements will slow the rate at which debt can be retired for several years; however, returning to paying down the debt is dependent on getting the economy back on track. Economic growth -- which will result from creating a tax environment that encourages businesses and people to invest and jobs to be created -- will produce the surpluses to fund critical government programs such as Social Security and Medicare.

We have a moral responsibility to provide tax relief for America's hard working taxpayers, not only because it is the correct way to help our economy, but also because the current tax rate is too high and too burdensome. The average American family pays more in taxes than on food, clothing and shelter combined. This is wrong. I am committed to reducing the tax burden on you and your family.

PRESIDENT SIGNS DEFENSE LEGISLATION

I was proud to be present this week at the Pentagon when President Bush signed the Defense Appropriations bill into law. The bill includes authorization for the Secretary of the Air Force to enter into a lease agreement with Boeing to procure 767 aircraft configured as air refueling tankers. Under the proposal contemplated by the Air Force, Boeing would deliver 100 modified 767s to the Air Force between Fiscal Year 2005 and 2011. I was proud to work to include this provision in the bill and to attend the signing ceremony.

ON THE FLOOR:

There were no votes in the House this week. Votes will resume on January 29th.

SCHEDULE

On Monday, I was in Seattle to speak to the Seattle Community Development Roundtable. I also attended a Pacific Northwest Economic Region (PNWER) meeting to discuss border security and economic development issues facing the Pacific Northwest. PNWER is a group of individuals from the public and private sectors from Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington, and the Western Canadian provinces of British Columbia, Alberta and the Yukon Territory. If it were a nation, PNWER would rank 11th among the world's leading industrial economies, with a combined population of more than 18 million and an annual gross regional product of over \$350 billion.

I then traveled to eastern Washington to participate in a focus group discussion for the Vanessa Behan Crisis Nursery in Spokane.

Later in the week, I returned to Washington, D.C. where I attended the bill signing ceremony for the Defense Appropriations legislation. I met with Robbie Callway and Steve Salem regarding the Boys & Girls Club of America. I met with Rudy DeLeon of Boeing. Finally, LeRoy Allison, President of the County Commissioners in Washington State and Bill Volger Grant County Commissioner stopped by to discuss water and transportation issues in eastern Washington.

Next week, I will be in eastern Washington. I will be in Spokane early in the week to attend various meetings as well as address the Ag Expo and attend the Boeing rally. On Thursday, I will spend the day in the Walla Walla area before returning to Spokane for more appointments on Friday. I look forward to seeing many of you next week during my travels.